Alberta

News release

Budget 2008
THE RIGHT PLAN FOR
TODAY & TOMORROW

April 22, 2008

Budget 2008 focuses on building Alberta's skilled workforce through education, training and employment investments

Province commits more than $8 billion to enhance education and employment needs of growing economy and population

Budget 2008 highlights:

- *More than $2 billion invested in adult learning, an increase of $221 million (12.1 per cent) including $125 million directed to creating new post-secondary seats*
- *K-12 education system operating support increases by $217 million (4.3 per cent) to $5.2 billion*
- *School boards receive a 4.53 percent increase in operational grant rates*
- *More than $234 million dedicated to moving more people into Alberta's labour force*
  - *$149 million in Employment and Training;*
  - *$80 million in Immigration; and*
  - *$5 million from the new Community Development Trust*

Edmonton... An investment of more than $8 billion in advanced education, education and employment programs will help build Alberta's skilled workforce and improve the long-run sustainability of the province.

Adult learning investment increases training spaces, tackles key labour demands
A $221 million net increase in adult learning will help boost student access to in-demand post-secondary programs, including health, in 2008-

09. This 12.1 per cent increase brings total support for adult learning spending to more than $2 billion.

"With the biggest ever advanced education budget, we're focusing on enhancing the accessibility, quality and affordability of Alberta's post-secondary system for students," said Doug Horner, Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. "At the same time we are strategically investing in advanced education to address the province's increased demand to grow and maintain a skilled and knowledgeable workforce."

The increase in post-secondary support includes:

- $125 million boost to create new seats in areas such as healthcare, apprenticeship, engineering and technology programs;
- $86 million for base operating grants; and
- $23 million to support the policy of limiting tuition fees.

In 2008-09 alone, nearly $835 million will be invested in post-secondary capital projects, part of a three-year investment of almost $1.5 billion.

Budget 2008 further enhances affordability by continuing to provide the most generous student assistance and student debt relief programs in Canada. In 2008-09, total funding for student assistance and student debt is $188 million including:

- $103 million in scholarships, bursaries and grants;
- $18 million in grants to Registered Education Savings Plans; and
- $67 million for Alberta's student loan and debt relief programs.

The interest rate payable on Alberta student loans will also be reduced from Prime plus 2.5 per cent to Prime. $126 million in student loans are expected to be disbursed in 2008-09.

K-12 invests the equivalent of $30 million each and every school day on students

Operating support for Alberta's Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system jumps to $5.2 billion, an increase of $217 million. This amount does not include $187 million in school property taxes collected by opted-out school boards. Teachers will receive pay increases determined by the past year's Alberta Average Weekly Earnings Index, which is 4.53 percent.

"Budget 2008 will ensure Alberta's students, teachers and school boards continue to excel," said Education Minister Dave Hancock. "This budget funds essential technology and curriculum materials, innovative school improvement initiatives, and numerous school construction and maintenance projects."

To support the further integration of technology into Alberta's classrooms, government has committed $18.5 million in new funding in each of the next three years. This is in addition to the $36 million in ongoing funding included in the budget for enhancing and supporting videoconferencing and online resources.

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Government will also provide $21.5 million per year over the next three years to expand Career and Technology Studies. Equipment upgrading and curriculum development will receive $16.5 million each year, plus $5 million per year will support health careers strategies for high school students.

Additional increases to education include:

- Class Size Initiative - funding increases by nine per cent or $17.5 million to $212 million. Since its inception in 2004-05, government has reduced class sizes by investing $729 million to hire more than 2,700 new teachers across the province;
- Alberta Initiative for School Improvement - increases by 4.7 per cent or $3.5 million to $77 million; and
- Special Needs - support for students with special needs increases by $30 million to $451 million.

School infrastructure capital support will be more than $1.6 billion over the next three years, including $624 million in 2008-09. The three-year plan, which includes more than 130 projects, provides:

- $1.1 billion for new schools and upgrading projects; and
- $511 million for capital maintenance and renewal.

Federal-provincial agreements to fund more training and employment supports; province invests additional funds to support new immigrants

More than $149 million in 2008-09, and nearly $450 million over three years will be provided for employment and training programs. This includes initiatives under the Canada-Alberta Labour Market Agreement, which is being finalized. The agreement provides $52.6 million in each of the next six years for career information and counselling. It will also provide more supports to help under-represented groups like Aboriginal people, women, people with disabilities, people with low literacy levels, and immigrants moving into the labour force.

About $80 million is budgeted for immigration programs in 2008-09, up $15.3 million from 2007-08. Over the next three years, more than $248 million will be provided for these programs.

The new Community Development Trust is intended to support communities most affected by changes in the global economy. Over the next three years, $104 million will be invested in Alberta's communities, including $20.9 million in 2008-09, of which $5 million will go to support training and skills development to assist workers affected by recent adjustments in the economy, and for Aboriginal Albertans.

Budget 2008 meets commitments to Albertans today while prudently planning for tomorrow.

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Alberta Government | Ministries Listing | Education Home Page | Advanced Education and Technology Home Page | Employment and Immigration Home Page | News Releases | Top of Page |

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